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SUBJECT: CANADA; AFGHANISTAN QUARTERLY REPORT CLAIMS
PROGRESS

REF: A. OTTAWA 430

[1](#)B. OTTAWA 179

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary. The Canadian government's fifth quarterly report to Parliament on "Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan" on September 15 again claimed progress on most of the benchmarks of its six priority areas and three signature projects, while admitting high levels of insurgent violence and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Popular and even Parliamentary interest in the report and current details of Canada's involvement is nonetheless low, apart from continued concern about the deaths of Canadian Forces (the 130th soldier was killed on September 13). With the Opposition Liberals in lock-step with the ruling Conservatives on the 2011 end date for Canada's military mission in Afghanistan, the issue is not likely to emerge as a campaign issue should the government fall in the coming weeks. There is much media speculation of what President Obama may request of Prime Minister Harper on Afghanistan during their September 16 meeting in Washington. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Minister of International Trade and chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan Stockwell Day on September 15 released the government's quarterly report on "Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan," its fifth since the March 2008 Parliamentary motion that extended the mission of the Canadian Forces, while mandating a final pull-out in 2011. The report admitted that "overall security conditions...continued to deteriorate," with the nationwide frequency of insurgent attacks in May and June "higher than in any month since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001." The report underscored that Kandahar province experienced a "steep increase in the number of enemy-initiated attacks against soldiers, civilians and facilities," with the frequency of security events in Kandahar "exceptionally high." It noted that IED incidents during the quarter were "108 percent higher than in the same three months of 2008." The report welcomed the influx of new U.S. troops, which has enabled Canada to concentrate on protecting the population of Kandahar City and surrounding villages instead of its earlier focus on "disrupting the insurgency in the countryside." It also admitted that "government capacity in Afghanistan is chronically weak and undermined by widespread corruption."

[1](#)3. (U) In support of the Afghan National Police, Canada announced a new contribution of C\$12 million to pay police salaries in Kandahar through the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, administered by the UN Development Program. Canada now has 41 civilian Canadian police officers deployed with the ANP and the Ministry of the Interior, up by 12 officers during the quarter. Canada also contributed C\$3 million to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, C\$6 million

to the World Food Programme, and C\$4 million to other humanitarian agencies, primarily for relief to Afghan refugees and internally displaced persons.

KEY FINDINGS

14. (U) Priority 1 -- Training and Mentoring Afghan National Security Forces

-- as in previous reports, only one of five Afghan National Army "kandaks" is fully capable of planning, executing, and sustaining near-autonomous operations (2011 target: four out of five so capable), but the other four have now "improved to the second highest capability milestone;"
Qthe second highest capability milestone;"
-- three of the five kandaks now have an effective strength of 70 pct or higher, compared to only one in 2008;
-- 71 pct of total security operations in the CF's AOR are now executed by the ANA, compared to a 45 pct baseline;
-- the ANA now has an approval rating of 85 pct or more in five of the six key districts, compared to only four in June 2008;
-- a majority of Kandaharis in one of the six key districts now feel secure or perceive security as improving, compared to zero in June 2008 (2011 target is a majority in all six);
-- 90 pct of all Afghan National Police have completed an eight-week training program, already exceeding the 80 pct 2011 target;
-- 100 pct of corrections officers have completed basic level training (meeting a 2011 target), with another 50 pct having completed advanced level training, and 100 pct of

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senior managers having completed management training.

15. (U) Priority 2 -- Strengthen Afghan institutional capacity to deliver core services and promote economic growth

-- in connection with the "signature project" of the Dahla Dam, a new bridge was completed during the quarter and 27 new jobs were created (a total of 199 to date);
-- Canada completed no new schools -- another "signature project" -- during the quarter, although 28 schools are now under construction, eight of which are more than 90 pct complete (five schools out of the 2011 target of 50 new schools are now ready);
-- almost 11,000 individuals (mostly women) have completed literacy training, and 470 adults have received vocational training (about halfway in both cases to the 2011 target);
-- although 75 pct of Kandaharis are satisfied with the Afghan government's efforts to improve the quality of life, only 44 pct -- down from 64 pct in 2008 -- are now satisfied with provision of education.

16. (U) Priority 3 -- Provide humanitarian assistance

-- on Canada's other "signature project -- polio eradication -- another 369,000 children in Kandahar were vaccinated, with 7.2 million children now vaccinated throughout the country, but there were 13 new cases of polio in the first half of 2009, including seven in Kandahar;
-- during the quarter, another 0.27 square kilometers were cleared of landmines and released (2011 target is 500 square kilometers), with 42,000 individuals having received mine risk education (2011 target is 200,000);
-- 330 more health care workers were trained during the quarter (2011 target is 500 receive training).

17. (SBU) Priority 4 -- Enhance border security

-- joint working groups under the Dubai Process are now meeting, and a Canadian-facilitated discussion between Afghan and Pakistani military officials took place in May;
-- construction began on a Joint District Coordination Center in Spin Boldak.

18. (U) Priority 5 -- Democratic Development and National Institutions

-- a new benchmark looks at how many provinces have completed a provincial strategic plan; training for officials from 22 provinces took place in May, with the first draft of Kandahar's strategic plan expected by December 2009;
-- the sixth quarterly report will discuss the August election processes and results.

19. (U) Priority 6 -- Political reconciliation
-- no results in this quarter, especially in the absence of a "fully developed national reconciliation strategy."

COMMENT

110. (SBU) As with previous reports, there was little public or even Parliamentary interest in the substance of this report. This underscores again how much Afghanistan has all but disappeared as a hot political issue in Canada, despite the public sympathy over each new death of a Canadian soldier in Afghanistan (now up to 130, as well as one diplomat and two development workers), most recently on September 13. Although the Official Opposition Liberal Party now appears determined to topple the government this fall (for which it will need the support of two other opposition parties), Afghanistan is extremely unlikely to emerge as a campaign issue -- even though it is clear that Canada is not reaching most of its significant benchmarks. Both the Liberals and the Conservatives remain committed to the March 2008 Qthe Conservatives remain committed to the March 2008 Parliamentary motion that extended the Canadian Forces' mandate in Afghanistan but also set a clear and final pull-out of the CF for 2011. Neither is now willing to revisit this issue, at least publicly. There is, however, much media speculation of what President Obama may request of Prime Minister Harper on Afghanistan during their September 16 meeting in Washington .

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